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SOVIET DISINFORMATION

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IN BRIEF

On the shadowy U.S.-Soviet battleground of intelligence and reciprocal strategic analysis, the Soviet Union has been able to magnify the advantages of systemic secrecy with a sustained campaign of disinformation. Indeed, according to U.S. intelligence testimony, disinformation has been elevated by Moscow into a major instrument of policy. Yet, the documented cases tell only the tip of the story and of the treacherous terrain of fact and fiction in which any conclusive analysis of Soviet strategic intentions must operate. There is urgent need of a concerted attack on the problem—all the more so in anticipation of a burst of disinformation activities that is likely to attend a new leadership succession in the Kremlin.

After more than three decades of accumulated experience, the study of Soviet plans, strategy and, simply stated, Soviet intentions remains one of the more difficult, controversial and frustrating realms of strategic analysis in the United States. It is difficult and controversial because of the nature and credibility of the intelligence sources on which such analysis must be based—defectors, in-place agents and Soviet writings, from the unclassified to the most highly classified—and the susceptibility of this intelligence data to manipulation by the opponent. It is frustrating not only because Soviet intentions behind the haze of Soviet secrecy are inherently a slippery phenomenon, but also because of a seemingly chronic propensity in the West to downgrade, in effect, the real importance of the study of

intentions. A former Director of Central Intelligence put it as follows:

The adversary's intention is not necessarily the key to determining his future action. His intention can change, his intention may not yet be formed, his intention may be rather a hope than a commitment to action.

Another former Director, who served subsequently as Secretary of Defense, went so far as to question the relevance of intentions to actual behavior:

Doctrines control the minds of men only in periods of nonemergency. They do not necessarily control the minds of men during periods of emergency. In the moment of truth,